

THE GLEN TERRACE TRAGEDY

by E. Phillips Oppenheim

BEING THE EIGHTH OF THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF
MR. STANLEY BROOKE, THE DELIBERATE DETECTIVE



BROOKE was conscious of a variety of most disquieting sensations. In the first place, he had completely lost his appetite. Furthermore, he was furiously and unreasonably angry. Charles hung around him continually, aware that all was not well with his favorite patron.

"It is not one of *monsieur's* regular days for luncheon here," he ventured.

Brooke was scowling across the room toward the small table against the wall, at which Constance and a companion were seated.

"It isn't," he admitted. "That accounts for it."

"Accounts for it, *monsieur*? But for what?"

Charles glanced wonderingly across the room—and understood. The perplexity upon his face disappeared.

"*Monsieur* perceives that the young lady in whom he was interested has found a companion," he remarked confidentially. "They sit together to-day for the third time. On Tuesday evening he dined with *mademoiselle*."

"The devil he did!" Brooke muttered.

"One notices these things," the waiter continued, glancing around to be sure that his services were not required elsewhere. "For so many months the young lady has been so retired, so lonely. It was *monsieur* who first spoke of her. Always she sits alone, she is reserved, she avoids notice. It is not until one looks carefully that one realizes that *mademoiselle* has an appear-

ance. The gentleman who is with her now," Charles went on, leaning a little closer toward Brooke and dropping his voice, "he asked about her one day last week very much as *monsieur* did."

Brooke muttered something between his teeth and poured himself out a glass of wine.

"The young lady would probably object to our discussing her," he remarked grimly. "You can fetch me my coffee. And this afternoon I will take a liqueur—the old brandy."

"*Monsieur* shall be served," Charles murmured, and hastened away. It was not until he had served the coffee and generously filled the liqueur-glass above the line with the deep-brown brandy that he spoke again. He leaned forward confidentially.

"It is for *monsieur's* private car, this," he whispered. "We do not, as a rule, speak of such things. The gentleman who is with her now—he wrote a little note to *mademoiselle* here in the restaurant at luncheon one day. *Mademoiselle* replied, and he took his coffee at her table."

Brooke waved the man away impatiently.

"That will do, Charles," he said. "There is probably some explanation. It certainly is not our business."

Brooke lit his cigarette, and while he smoked he looked across the room. The man was apparently a little less than middle-aged, dark, with small, black mustache, well-groomed, well-dressed. He would, without doubt, rank as good-looking. His manner indicated an interest in his companion which to some extent, at any rate, she seemed inclined to return.

Constance was certainly more animated than usual. The pallor of her cheeks was undisturbed, but her eyes were exceptionally bright, and she was listening with obvious interest to all that her companion had to say. Beyond the faint uplifting of her eyebrows and the grave nod with which she had acknowledged his greeting upon his entrance, she had taken no further notice of Brooke.

That no more familiar intercourse should take place between them in public beyond that form of recognition was a condition to which she had rigidly adhered ever since their strange partnership began. Brooke hated it and obeyed. To-day he was more than ever a rebel.

Presently he paid his bill and went. Constance, although without doubt she saw his preparations for departure, took not the slightest further notice of him. She was talking all the time, and her manner, for her, toward this new acquaintance, was positively friendly. Brooke jammed his hat upon his head and walked round to the club.

"Bridge!" he muttered to himself. "A debauch at bridge, and the Lord help my partner!"

The morning had been hopelessly wet, which was the reason Brooke was not playing golf. There was plenty of bridge; there were also billiards and other sane amusements to be found at the club. Brooke passed the time away as well as he could, but he found it a task of some difficulty. His usual cheerfulness seemed to have deserted him. He revoked at bridge, lost two games of billiards, and contradicted a member of the committee; altogether a disastrous afternoon.

About five o'clock, just after he had sent his tea away for the second time, a page came in search of him.

"Wanted on the telephone, sir," he announced.

Brooke rose promptly.

"Any name?" he asked.

"There was no name, sir," the boy replied. "The gentleman is waiting on the line now."

Brooke hurried down-stairs, passed into the telephone-box, and took up the receiver.

"This is Brooke," he said. "Who are you?"

"I am Inspector Simmons," the voice answered. "I am speaking from Miss Robinson's rooms."

"Is Miss Robinson there?" Brooke asked.

"She is not here at present," the man replied. "I rang up to ask whether it would be quite convenient for you to step round here."

"Of course I'll come," Brooke assented. "There's nothing wrong, is there?"

The voice hesitated a moment.

"Not that I know of. Perhaps it would be as well if you came round."

Brooke rang off, put on his hat and coat, caught a taxicab, and in a few minutes' time presented himself at Constance's rooms. To his surprise the inspector, who admitted him, was still alone there.

"Where is Miss Robinson?" Brooke demanded.

"That's exactly what I'm not sure about," the inspector explained. "I had an appointment with her here this afternoon at three o'clock. I arrived quite punctually, rang the bell, and as there was no answer, I went away. I came again half an hour ago, and as there was still no one here, I took the liberty of entering. Miss Robinson, as a rule, is very particular about her appointments."

"She was lunching with a friend today," Brooke remarked gloomily.

"Where? What sort of a friend?" the inspector asked.

Brooke hesitated. The inspector's tone was eager, almost impatient.

"It was a man I think she met at the Café Lugano, just a restaurant acquaintance."

"Was he dark, with a small, black mustache, brown, freckled complexion, well-dressed, looked like a military man?" the inspector asked quickly.

"That is an exact description of him," Brooke admitted. "Who is he? What do you know about him?"

The inspector glanced at the clock.

"What time did you say they were lunching?" he asked.

"Between half past one and two," Brooke replied. "I left them there."

"That confirms my information," the inspector said, half to himself. "It is now past five o'clock. You'll excuse me for a minute, if you please."

He went to the telephone and gave a few rapid orders. Then he turned round to Brooke.

"You've heard of the Glen Terrace tragedy, Mr. Brooke?" he asked.

"Of course! What about it?"

"The man whom you saw lunching with Miss Robinson is the man we are shadowing for it," the inspector declared. "We can't arrest him at the moment because there isn't sufficient evidence. All that we can do is to watch and see that he doesn't get away. I'm as confident that he did it as that I'm standing here at this moment, but if we try to put our hands on him too quickly, and he once gets away, he is safe for life."

"Miss Robinson took the matter up entirely on her own account. She had an idea that she could get the evidence we are lacking. I told her it wasn't a proper

case for her to mix herself up in. She only smiled at me. She is a determined young lady, as I dare say you know. Anyway, she has been meeting this man for the last few days, and she told me to be here at three o'clock. She expected, I believe, to have something definite to say. I don't mind confessing that I am a little worried about it. It seems—"

"You say your men are shadowing him?" Brooke interrupted quickly. "Can't we find out exactly where he is?"

"They lost him after leaving the restaurant," the inspector replied. "It seems he went in by the hotel and must have come out by the restaurant entrance. We could have had our hand upon his shoulder any time during the last three months, and there isn't the least chance of his being able to escape out of the country. But where he is at this precise moment I must admit I don't know."

"Shall I go to the restaurant," Brooke asked, "and find out if any one remembers their leaving?"

"I have gone as far as that myself," the inspector remarked. "What I was told bears out what you say. Miss Robinson and Delamoir left the Café Lugano together in a taxicab at five minutes to two."

Brooke glanced at the clock.

"My God!" he muttered. "That was more than three hours ago!"

II

THE sun was shining between the showers and the sky was unexpectedly blue when Constance and the man with whom she had been lunching left the little restaurant in Old Compton Street. They stood for a moment upon the pavement, and Constance, with a farewell nod, prepared to turn away.

"Good morning, Mr. Harold," she said. "We must have another talk some day about these fancies of yours."

"Why not this afternoon?" he asked. "Don't you see how beautiful it is just now? Couldn't you spare—say, one hour? Do you know what I was going to do? I was going to take a taxicab and drive about alone. Come with me."

She looked at him thoughtfully for a moment. Her hesitation made him the more insistent.

"Do come," he begged. "You know how nervous and broken-down I am. To have any one near as calm and self-cen-

tered as you are is like a sedative. Please come, just for one hour."

"I will come," she agreed.

He called a taxi and handed her in.

"Is there anywhere you wish to go particularly?" he inquired eagerly.

She shook her head.

"I have no choice," she replied, "only we must not be longer than an hour."

"To Putney," he told the driver. "I will direct you again."

He took his place by her side. In this clear sunlight there were things to be noticed about him not easily apparent in the dimmer light of the restaurant. He was dressed in mourning, with a black tie, and a black band around his hat. There were lines upon his face and a strange restlessness in his deep-set eyes. Every now and then his lips twitched. He looked about him all the time with little abrupt movements of the head.

"If I were you," she suggested, "I should see a doctor. Overwork should never make any one quite as nervous as you seem to be. It is so easy to cure oneself if one has the will."

"It is not only overwork," he muttered. "Let us forget it for a few minutes. How wonderful to be so calm and collected as you are always! Do you never feel emotions, little lady?"

She turned her head and looked at him.

"My name," she said, "is Miss Robinson."

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed quickly. "It shall be just as you say. Only, somehow or other, I have been feeling so lonely, and you are such a strange, quiet little person. You have such a gift of making one talk and of listening."

She smiled.

"If you will keep your part of the bargain," she promised, "I will stay with you; not otherwise."

"I will keep it," he agreed.

They were passing through St. James's Park, toward Buckingham Palace. Now that they had left the more crowded streets behind, he seemed a little more at his ease.

"Let me advise you seriously," she begged, "to go and see a nerve specialist. There is a man in Harley Street—I could give you his address—to whom ever so many barristers go, and members of Parliament."

He laughed curiously.

"You think it is overwork only," he groaned. "I wish—oh, I only wish I dared tell you!"

She looked steadily ahead. There was so little about him that she did not know—one thing only.

"Why don't you?" she murmured.

"You are so sensible," he muttered. "You would not go into hysterics."

"I am certainly not given to that sort of thing," she assured him.

"You are a woman, too," he went on—"very different from her, but still a woman. In a way you would understand. Promise not to jump out of the taxicab?"

"I promise you that under no circumstances will I attempt anything of the sort," she replied.

"My name is not Harold," he confessed, gripping the strap by his side and shaking as he spoke. "My name is Richard Harold Delamoire—Delamoire, you know!"

She turned her head.

"I seem to have heard the name lately," she murmured.

"Heard it!" he exclaimed. "Haven't you heard it at every street corner, seen it on every newspaper placard?"

"Of course," she assented. "You are the Richard Delamoire whose wife was found poisoned in your house at Putney."

He looked at her, his lips parted, his eyes blinking rapidly.

"You don't mind?" he cried. "You are not terrified?"

"Not in the least," she assured him calmly. "Why should I be?"

"You don't know the worst," he told her. "The police are watching me all the time. They think I did it. They think I murdered her. Everybody thinks so. The bus drivers, the tradespeople, the children in the street—they all stare at me curiously as I go by—the man who poisoned his wife! The women look at me from behind the curtains. The men hurry when they pass. It's worse than overwork, this, Miss Robinson."

"Yes," she admitted, "it is worse than overwork."

"There isn't a soul," he continued, "except the doctor, whom I've dared to speak with about it. I haven't been near my club, I've had to leave my favorite restaurants alone—that's why I turned up at the Lugano, where I first saw you. I thought the doctor might have talked to me now and then. We used to be quite

friendly once. I went to see him the other night—just dropped in to have a pipe, as I used to. He only said a few words, but it was the way he looked at me. I understood. I remembered his evidence at the inquest. Did you read about the inquest, Miss Robinson?"

"I did," she confessed. "It rather interested me."

"Ah!" he groaned. "They say that after the doctor's evidence it was a toss up whether I was arrested or not. Do you know why I wasn't? Do you know why I am free now? They are waiting to get a little more evidence. They are afraid they might try me and I might get off, and then they'd find out too late. Evidence! I could give them all the evidence they wanted."

"Then why don't you?" she asked.

He laughed harshly.

"Why should I? Is it my business? Let us talk about something else, Miss Robinson. I want to get away from it for a little time. You know the worst now. I've nothing to hide from you. You know that I am Richard Delamoire."

She watched him from her corner without flinching.

"Is it true," she asked, "that you have inherited a large sum of money by your wife's death?"

"Quite true," he answered; "quite true. Oh, I am rich! I hadn't much before I married her, but she left me everything. I thought of stealing out of the country, but they are so clever, these detectives. They'd think I was running away. I should feel a hand on my shoulder just as I was getting into the train. Ugh! If only there was some one to go with me! If only I could get away from this infernal solitude!"

He looked at her eagerly. There was very little encouragement in her emotionless face.

"Have you no friends or relatives at all?" she asked.

"No relatives—not one," he replied. "I was born in Australia. Most of my friends over here were my wife's friends, and—"

His voice seemed to leave him for a moment. He tried to speak and failed.

"They keep out of my way," he went on, after a moment's pause. "I don't know why. Can you think? They can't believe—not all of them. Let us talk

about something else. Have you ever been a nurse, Miss Robinson?"

"Certainly not," she answered. "Why do you ask that?"

"I don't know, except that you are so restful and so strong," he declared. "You make me feel almost like a child. That's because my nerve is gone, of course. Are you very well off, I wonder?"

"I am not at all well off," she told him. "I am a typist."

"If I were to give you a large sum of money," he went on eagerly, "would you go abroad with me—just as my nurse," he explained hurriedly, "just to be with me and to keep me from being frightened always? You could have plenty of money, beautiful dresses. Dresses would make such a difference to you—dresses and hats. You are queer-looking, you know. You look old-fashioned and dowdy, and your face is so still and quiet that one forgets that you have really beautiful eyes. It would change you tremendously to be well-dressed."

Her eyes were half closed with silent laughter. There was something about the laugh a little cruel.

"You are afraid of me!"

"Who—I?" she asked. "I afraid?"

"I didn't mean that!" he exclaimed. "I mean that you are afraid I should want to make love to you. Do you know, sometimes I think that I shall never want to make love to another woman."

"How old are you?" she inquired.

"Thirty-nine," he replied. "I was twenty-six years old when I married Maggie. She hadn't her money then. She was just a chorus-girl."

"Is it true that you used always to quarrel?"

"We used to quarrel a good deal," he admitted. "I am afraid I was impatient and a little jealous. Maggie was always having flirtations. She was crazy for admiration."

Constance sighed as she looked away. After all, there were all the commonplace elements of tragedy here.

"You really wish to talk about something else?" she asked. "Come, I will try. You shall tell me about your life in Australia. I think you said that you were born there."

"It isn't any use," he answered. "I want to talk about something else and I can't. It always comes back."

"Then if you won't talk about anything else," she said, "tell me what you meant when you said that you could give the police the evidence they needed."

He shook his head.

"No," he muttered, "I couldn't trust anybody with that, not even you!"

She was silent. He sat by her side, and his manner gradually became calmer.

"It is odd," he went on, half to himself, "how much I have told you, really; you—just a little stranger whom I spoke to in a restaurant. Why did you let me speak to you?"

"You looked lonely," she answered. "I am never afraid to speak to any one. I can take care of myself."

"Yes," he admitted, "I should say that that was true. You can very well take care of yourself. Would nothing terrify you, Miss Robinson? Would nothing shake your nerves?"

She smiled.

"I have no opportunity of judging. My life is a very uneventful one."

"Try them this afternoon," he begged eagerly. "You see where we are? We are close to Putney. The third turn to the left, then another turn, and the fourth house is where I live. Not a soul has crossed the threshold since that day. Come in with me. Sit with me for a little time. Perhaps it will help. Perhaps after that I shall not be so terrified. If only I can feel another human being breathing the same air in that sitting-room where we used to be! Will you come?"

She did not hesitate. She had no fear. She felt easily his master.

"If it is any satisfaction to you," she assented, "I will come."

His eyes flashed. He gave a direction to the driver, who looked at him curiously. In a few moments they turned off the main street. In less than five minutes the taxicab was pulled up outside one of a little row of villas. As they stepped out Constance was half conscious of people peering from behind the windows. Some women opposite, who had been pointing out the place to a stranger, stared open-mouthed.

Constance followed her companion composedly into the house, the door of which he opened with a latch-key. He closed it behind them.

"Why have you sent away the taxicab?" she asked.

"You won't hurry?" he pleaded. "Why

should I keep it there? People always gather round if they think I am here. They stare so. Come!"

He opened the door of a little drawing-room, a queer apartment, half Oriental, with a tented divan in one corner and a curious smell of incense. The wall-paper was of bright yellow and the curtains black. There were withered flowers in the vases and cigarette-ash upon the carpet. The atmosphere was almost unbearable.

"Do you mind opening a window?" Constance begged. "I couldn't possibly sit here like this."

He nodded and threw up one of the side windows.

"I have only just put my head in here since," he explained hoarsely. "I couldn't bear it. This is where we used to sit. Maggie had such queer taste. I don't think," he went on, "that she had really a healthy nature. She liked everything exotic and unnatural. Poor woman! You see the black curtains and the black carpet. She thought they went with the bright yellow walls and that they helped her complexion."

"She was older than I am, you know, and she used to fancy sometimes that she was losing her looks. Yes, I can breathe now there is some one in the room with me! Sit just where you are, please, Miss Robinson. She used to sit over in that corner, and often she would lie down on the divan there."

"I couldn't bear all the stuffy hangings, but she loved them. Now shall we talk about something? Shall I show you some views? There's an album there of my wife's notices. Or shall we talk about—Australia?"

She shook her head.

"You know very well, Mr. Delamoir," she said, "that, however hard you were to try, you couldn't talk about anything except—"

"Of course you are right," he interrupted. "It isn't any use. I can no more talk about anything else than I can think about anything else. If you want to see her picture, there it is on the corner of the mantelpiece. I can't look—I don't know why—I can't!"

He had turned his back upon her. Constance moved to the mantelpiece and took up the picture. It gave her at first almost a shock. It was the picture of a woman, haggard, painted, with darkened eyebrows,

false hair, in a ball dress cut absurdly low, and a satin skirt absurdly tight. She remembered the words Inspector Simmons had used in speaking to her of the case: "A woman any man would be glad to be rid of!"

Her companion drew the curtain a little.

"There are some boys outside!" he exclaimed irritably. "And those women—their eyes seem never off the place. Do you mind the blind being down?"

She shook her head. There was still a long shaft of sunlight piercing the gloom of the room. Presently he came and sat opposite to her.

"If there were any way," he said, "of ending this—"

"What way could there be?" she interrupted. "You must travel soon and try to forget."

"Forget!" he repeated. "Would you forget, I wonder? Could you carry about with you the horrible knowledge I have locked in my heart, and forget? No one could."

"Well, then, why not tell the truth and have it over?" she asked calmly.

He sprang from his seat. She sat quite still, unflinching. His passion, however, was not one of anger.

"If only I could!" he moaned. "If only—"

He stopped short.

"Stay where you are, Miss Robinson," he implored. "Stay just where you are. Don't move. I shall be back in a moment."

He left the room. She heard him climb the stairs and remained where she was, looking about her. It seemed to her that in all the adventures of her life she had never found herself in such an atmosphere.

She looked at the picture of the woman, worthy presiding genius of such an apartment. And yet there was something in the eyes—was it terror or despair?—something piteous shining out from the midst of the wreck; just in the same way that, on a table only a few feet away, a little marble statuette of exquisite design struck a strange note in the midst of the flamboyant furniture and vulgar gewgaws with which the place was littered.

She heard his footsteps descending the stairs. He entered the room. There was a new look in his face, white and strained. He carried in his hand a little volume, bound in violent purple and tied up with ribbon. He held it out to her.

"The evidence," he muttered—"I spoke of the evidence! Only a page or two, mind. You can read; then you will understand. You will be the only person in the world except myself who understands. Don't begin at the beginning—that's all rubbish. Begin there—there!"

His forefinger showed her the place. She began to read. The entries were sprawled all about the book in a loose, untidy handwriting, and without regard to keeping within the limits of the dates.

Began to-day worse than ever. I got up at twelve and passed the looking-glass on my way to the bath. I almost shrieked. I can't be like it! I had forgotten my hair! I dressed very quickly. Such beautiful things I put on. Then for a long time I could not make up my mind. I put on my lilac dress and my ermine, with a new hat that came last night, and a thick veil. I spent quite an hour with *madame* in her parlor. Then I walked slowly away down Bond Street. At first no one looked at me at all. Then a man and a woman passed and I heard the man laugh!

I looked in at a shop-window—perhaps my front was a little crooked. I went down to the theater. I thought to-day, perhaps, there might be a chance. *Madame* had taken a lot of pains. The stage-doorkeeper smiled when he told me that Bunsome was out. Liar! Bunsome came down the passage just a minute later. I told him what I wanted. He looked at me in a queer sort of way.

"Can't see whom I'm talking to," he muttered. "Take off your veil." I took it off. Perhaps my fingers trembled, perhaps I took it off clumsily. He turned away. I could have sworn that he was laughing!

"My good woman," he said, "we want girls!" . . . I got out somehow, crossed the road. I went into a public house. I had two glasses of port—filthy stuff, but they won't sell me drugs in quantities big enough. Never mind, when I got home I forgot!

Constance looked up. He was still standing over her.

"Go on," he ordered. "Turn to the next page. Turn quickly."

She obeyed him.

Last night I cried myself to sleep. It doesn't matter crying in the night-time. I was in the West End all day, and I wore my new tailor-made gown, the patent shoes with the gray suede tops, and gray stockings. I met Peter face to face. It doesn't seem long ago since he used to beg me to go out to luncheon with him. He hurried on. I tried to stop him, but he muttered something about an appointment, looked at me as though there were something wrong about my

appearance, and kept glancing around nervously, as though he were afraid that some one would see us.

I went in to *madame's* and looked at myself in a glass. Glasses are such liars. I know I don't look like that. Every woman has to use a little rouge and a little false hair nowadays to keep in the fashion. I hate looking-glasses! . . .

I lunched at Prince's; got rid of Dick. No one ever takes any notice of a woman if she's with a man younger than herself. I am going to write the truth. I can't bear it! I don't think I will ever lunch there alone again. The men glanced at me as they came in, and then looked away. There wasn't one who had that expression in his face I used to see always when I lunched alone and men passed. It frightened me.

I couldn't eat anything. I went into the ladies' room afterward and I ventured to look in the glass. It was *madame's* fault. She had put too much rouge on my left cheek. Yes, it must have been *madame's* fault! I shall try again.

Constance put the book away from her. Her voice was not altogether steady.

"I don't want to read any more," she said.

"One more page," he insisted. "One more, please. You are beginning to understand. One human person in this world understands besides myself! I think that I shall go about with a lighter heart."

She turned the page.

To-day I feel will be different. Laroche has sent me home the most wonderful white velvet gown. I have rested until twelve o'clock. Now I have just put it on. It fits me divinely. One would say that I had the figure of a girl. It is marvelous. I have put on my big black hat with the feathers and a thinner veil. Yes, I am going to risk a thinner veil!

I shall go to *madame* for an hour, and then I will take all my courage in my hands. I will go once more to Prince's. I know that Stephen will be there. I will stop him as he passes my table, and I will watch him. I shall see. He used to love me in white. Somehow or other I feel younger myself to-day. As to being old, it is absurd. I am not old.

I have sent Susan for a taxi, and I have made Richard go away for the day. He bothers me so, wanting to go about with me. What admiration can a woman have who has a young husband with her! He doesn't seem to understand. . . . I don't know why I feel so excited to-day. I think it is the white velvet gown. I shall put on my white silk stockings. It is a little daring, perhaps, but Stephen loves white. . . . Now I am going. I don't think, after all, I shall ever need to use that little packet.

The writing sprawled down to the end

of the page. Constance looked up. Delamoire's eyes were upon her.

"Turn over," he ordered.

She obeyed.

I can scarcely hold my pen. My God! I have seen the truth! It is the end! *Madame* called in little Emilie to look at me before I left. "*Madame*," she declared, "*is ravissante!*" I paid her and went out. Just as I reached the door I fancied I heard a laugh. At the time I thought that it must be fancy. Now I am not so sure! I went to Prince's, I got my table just inside. I waited. Every one who passed seemed to be in such a hurry.

Bunsome came in, and Elliman, and Captain Jenks, but they none of them appeared to see me. And then Stephen! He saw me, and he was alone, but he was going to pass. I held out my hand and I smiled at him.

"Stephen," I said, "won't you stop and speak to me?" He seemed quite awkward about it, but he stopped. I looked at the place by my side.

"Are you alone?" I asked very softly. He muttered something about having to join a party. I looked at him intently; he used to say that he liked me to look at him like that.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" I asked him. "Can't you stay for a little time and talk?" He shook his head. Then I felt suddenly queer and giddy. Something came into my heart and I held him when he wanted to get away. I said, "Stephen, tell me the truth. Why do you avoid me? Why do those others hurry by? You men used to crowd around me, not so very many years ago. Why is it?"

He hesitated for a moment. Then he looked me straight in the face.

"Since you've asked me that question, Maggie," he said, "I'll tell you, as much for your husband's sake as your own. It's because you are close upon sixty years of age and you dress up to make yourself look like a girl and sit about and expect men to behave as though you were still attractive. And you're not. You're an old woman, and you know you are. Leave off painting yourself and wearing clothes thirty years too young for you and we'd all be glad to see you now and then and talk to you. But no man likes to be seen talking to a guy. . . . I don't mean to be unkind," he went on, for I suppose I was looking at him in a queer sort of way. "I've just told you this from myself and the others, for Richard's sake as well as your own. Now be a sensible woman and give it up."

I think that he went away then. I am not quite sure what happened to me. I found myself in a taxicab, and here I am—here I am! Fortunately, I didn't have to buy anything. I've had the stuff with me for years. I am leaving this in case there should be any trouble. Whoever reads this, if it shouldn't be Richard, please tell him there's a letter for the coroner on the

next page. . . . I don't know what it's going to be like on my next page, but it won't be worse than to-day. I'm going to—turn over!

He took the book from her fingers. Constance suddenly felt cold.

"I loved her!" he muttered hoarsely. "Don't you understand that I shall have to hang before I could show that book?"

She gave him both her hands.

"Yes," she said, "I think I understand."

III

CONSTANCE walked into her rooms at a few minutes after six. Brooke and Inspector Simmons were on the point of leaving. She looked at them in some surprise.

"May I ask what you are doing in my apartments?" she inquired, beginning to take off her gloves.

"You forget that you had an appointment with me here at three o'clock," Simmons remarked.

"Quite right," Constance admitted. "I had forgotten it."

"And as we had information," Brooke continued, "that at five minutes to two this afternoon you left the Café Lugano with a certain notorious person called Delamoire, you may understand that we were becoming a little uneasy."

She sank into her easy chair. The two men looked at her. Every muscle in Brooke's body seemed to stiffen.

"Something has happened!" he exclaimed.

She drew a little brown-paper parcel from her pocket.

"Mr. Simmons," she said, "I started out this afternoon to try to trap a man into a confession of his guilt. I have instead succeeded in becoming acquainted with his innocence. The proofs are here."

Simmons moved swiftly forward, but Constance retained possession of the parcel.

"This," she went on quietly, "is his wife's diary. It is my belief that Delamoire would have gone to the gallows sooner than have given it up. I have talked to him for some time, and he has let me have it for two hours, on one condition.

"You are to read it, and the superintendent. Beyond that, no other person. Not a word of it is to be breathed to the press. Sooner than have had a single line appear in any newspaper, Delamoire would have hung.

"There is no doubt," she continued, "about its being his wife's diary. You will find inside some of her letters, in her own handwriting, and there is also one addressed to the coroner, which is in itself conclusive.

"If, however, you have any remaining doubts as to the genuineness of this diary, you have only to go down to the Hilarity Theater and interview some of the young women who are mentioned in the earlier pages. Remember, however, that I part with the book only on the terms I have mentioned."

Simmons accepted the parcel and his charge.

"Queer," he remarked. "I know quite a lot of people who never believed in Delamoire's guilt; who even declared that he had an odd sort of affection for his wife, weird creature though she was."

Constance's eyes suddenly shone. For a single moment she was beautiful.

"There are many strange ways," she said, "in which a man may love a woman."

The inspector took his leave. Brooke turned to her earnestly, her last words sounding in his ears.

"But his task is," said he, "to make the woman believe and understand."

Constance felt her cheeks burn. Her eyes would no longer stand to their posts, arrogant sentinels, cool defenders against love's assaults. They turned, cowardly, in that moment, and took refuge behind their fringed curtains, while she answered, softly, very, very softly indeed:

"But I *have* known, Stanley, dear boy, all along. I have known—and understood."

"And the other partnership that I have proposed before to-day," said he, eagerly as a thirsty man, "the closer partnership, Constance?"

"I think," she answered shyly, "that we may have the papers drawn."